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ABSTRACT

This booklet is an overview of female employment today. The profile of the woman worker is changing, in terms of personal characteristics such as age, marital family status, education, race, and family income, and also in terms of employment characteristics, such as occupation, income, and unemployment patterns. The report predicts a continuing rise in female employment. (BH)

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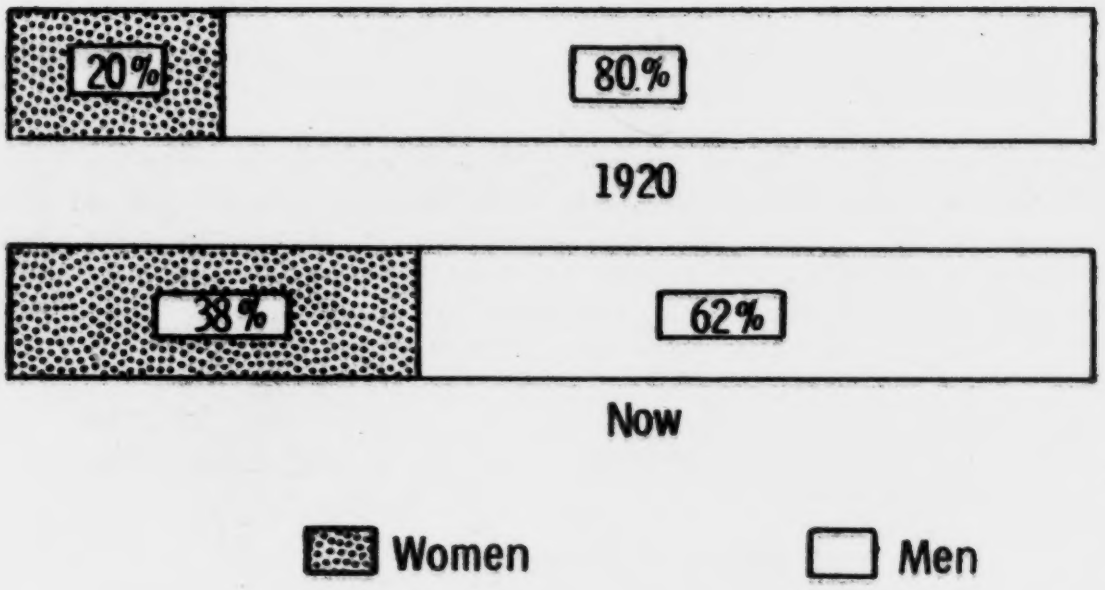
WOMEN WORKERS TODAY

The 31 million women who are in the labor force today are a cross section of all American women. They are of all ages from 16 to 70 or more and of every race and color. They live on farms, in suburbs, and in central cities. They include the married, the single, the widowed, and the divorced or separated.

During the last 50 years the ranks of women workers have risen from only 1 out of 5 to almost 2 out of 5 of all American workers:



Over this period the profile of the average woman worker has changed greatly--from that of the young (28) single factory worker or clerk of 1920 to that of the older (39) married woman of today who may be found in any of a great many occupations.

American women supply many of the workers needed today for growing industries. Their services are equally necessary to the continued smooth functioning of vital health and educational services, factories, stores, and offices. They contribute substantially to the incomes of their families. What kinds of women are they? What jobs do they hold? What are their job patterns? What do they earn?

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PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WORKERS

The likelihood that a woman will be a worker varies considerably according to her age, marital and family status, education, race, and, if married, her husband's income.

Age.--A woman is most likely to be working if she is young and has finished her schooling or if she is mature (35 years and over) and has no young children. She is less apt to work if she is a teenager, is in her childbearing years, or is 65 years of age or over:

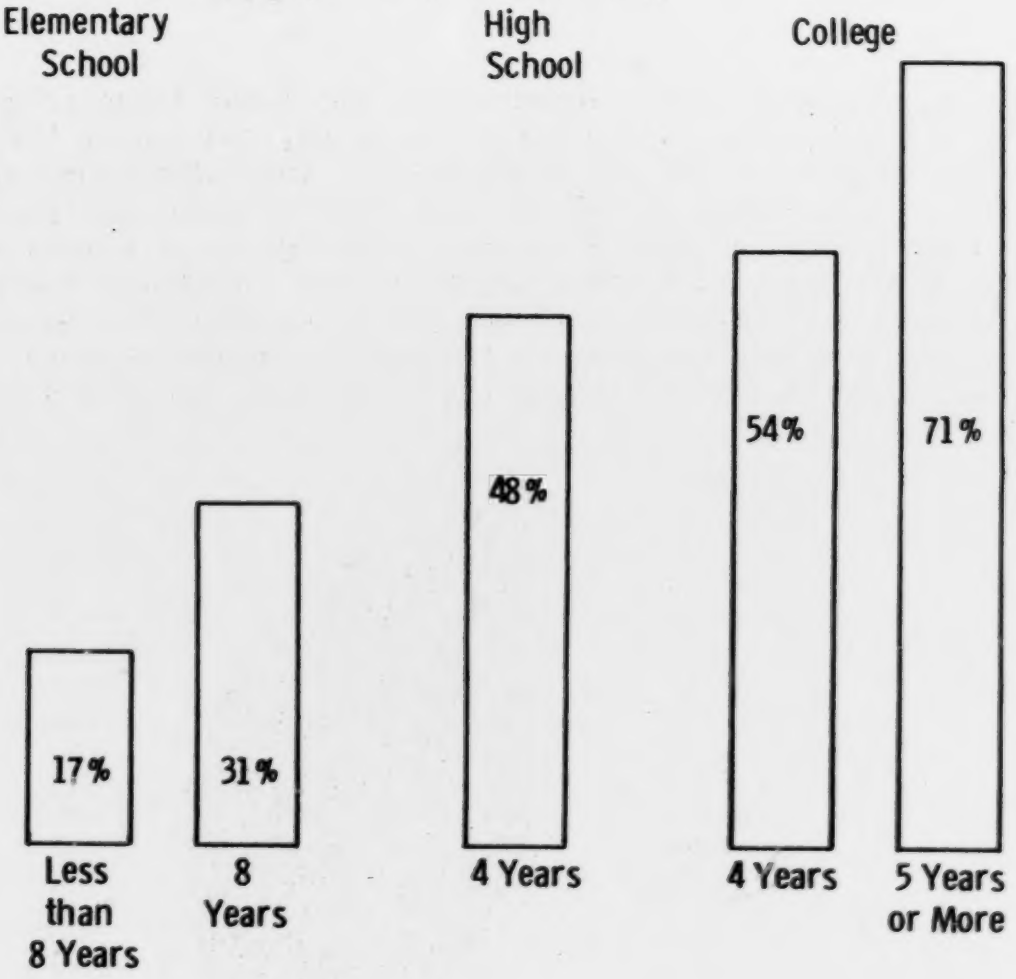
Age	Percent in labor force in 1969
16 to 19 years	43
20 to 24 years	57
25 to 34 years	44
35 to 44 years	50
45 to 54 years	54
55 to 64 years	43
65 years and over	10
18 to 64 years	49

Marital status.--Almost three-fifths of all women workers are married and living with their husbands; more than one-fifth are single; and almost one-fifth are widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands. Married women are more likely to be workers than are widows (a great many of whom are elderly), but they are less likely to be in the labor force than divorced or separated women or single women:

Marital status	Percent in labor force in 1969
Single	51
Married (husband present)	40
Divorced or separated	62
Widowed	26

Children.--About 11.6 million women in the labor force in March 1969 had children under the age of 18 years, but 7.4 million of these working mothers had no children under the age of 6. The presence of young children in the family has a direct effect on the mother's labor force participation. Among married women living with their husbands, only about 3 out of 10 of those with children under 6 years of age but 5 out of 10 of those with school-age children only are workers. Among widows, divorcees, and women separated from their husbands, however, the chances of being in the labor force are about even for those with children under 6 and rise to about 2 out of 3 for those with school-age children only.

Education.--Two-thirds of all women workers have at least a high school education, and more than 1 out of 10 is a college graduate. Generally the more education a woman has, the more likely she is to be in the labor force. In March 1968, labor force participation rates of women ranged from 17 percent for those with less than 5 years of school completed to 71 percent for those with 5 years or more of college:



Race.--About one-eighth of all women workers are Negro.* The labor force participation rates of Negro women are generally higher than those of white women. Half of all Negro women 16 years of age and over were in the labor force in 1969 (42 percent white), as were 57 percent of Negro women in the usual working ages of 18 to 64 years (49 percent white).

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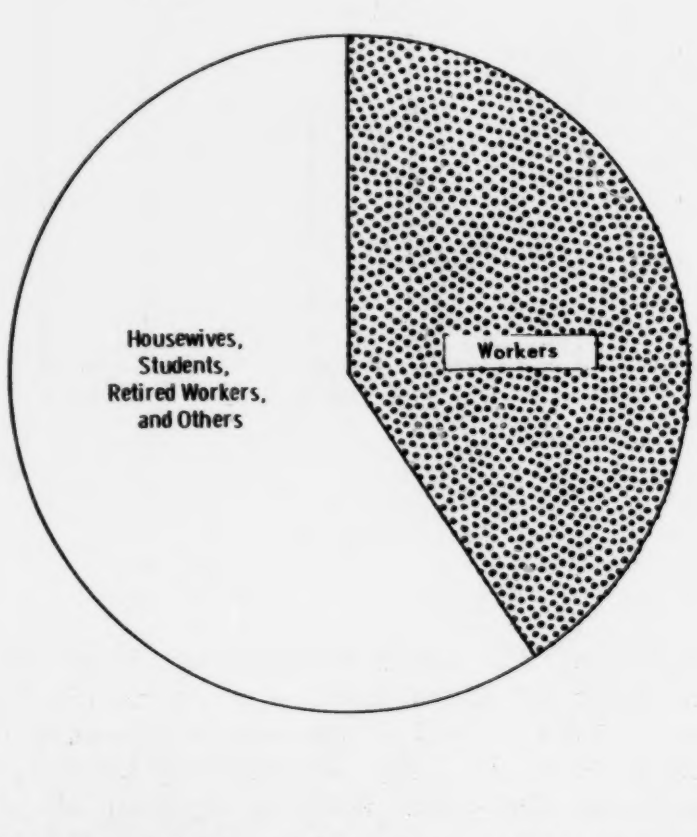
* Negro and other races (except white).

Husband's income.--A married woman is most apt to be working if her husband's income is between $5,000 and $6,999 (46 percent) and least apt to be working if her husband's income is either below $3,000 (35 percent) or $10,000 or over (33 percent).

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WORKERS

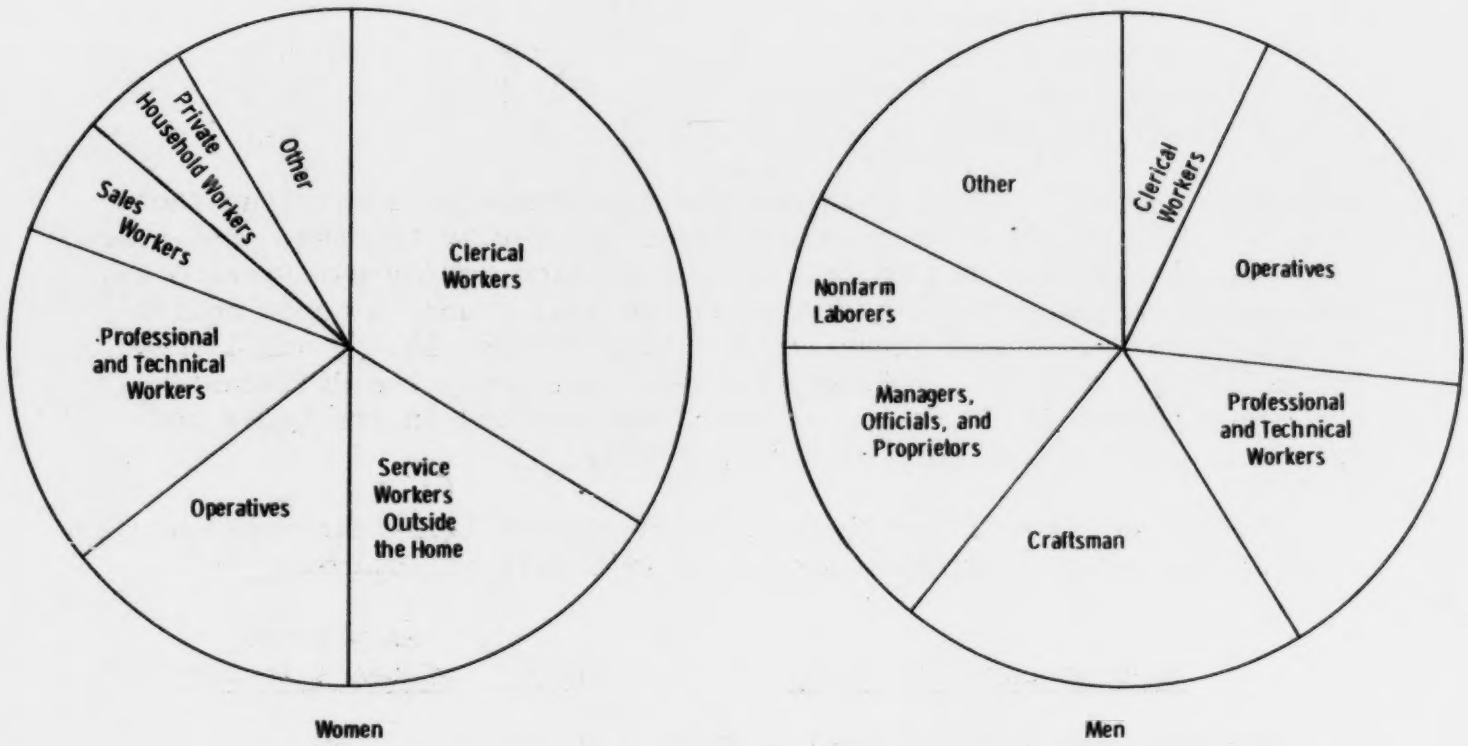
Worklife patterns.--Typically a woman enters the labor force after she has finished her schooling, works for a few years, and leaves the labor force when she marries or has her first child. Then after her children are in school or are grown, she either goes back to paid employment or undertakes some type of community service. The return of mature women to the labor force has been a vital factor in the tremendous increase in the number of women workers in recent years--currently 43 percent of all women 16 years of age and over in the population are workers. Most of the almost 41 million women not in the labor force in 1969 were keeping house:



Full-time and full-year workers.--About 7 out of 10 women workers have full-time jobs at some time during the year, but only about 4 out of 10 work at full-time jobs the year round. Girls 16 to 19 years of age, most of whom are in school, are least likely to be year-round full-time workers (8 percent in 1968), while women 45 to 64 years of age are the most likely to be so employed (54 percent in 1968).

Part-time workers.--Part-time employment frequently is preferred by married women with family responsibilities (especially women with young children), by students, and by women 65 years of age and over. During recent years the shortage of skilled workers in many occupations has provided increasing opportunities for part-time as well as full-time workers. Thus, 11 million women worked at part-time jobs at some time during 1968. Part-time work is most common among farm, private household, and sales workers. But many women also hold part-time jobs as waitresses or cooks; stenographers, typists, or secretaries; teachers; and medical or other health workers.

Occupations.--As shown in the following chart for employed workers in 1969, the occupational distribution of women is very different from that of men:



Women are more apt than men to be white-collar workers, but the jobs they hold are usually less skilled and less well paid than those of men. Women professional workers are most apt to be teachers, nurses, and other health workers, while men are most frequently employed in professions other than teaching and health. Women are less likely than men to be managers and officials, and are far more likely to be clerical workers.

Only 1 out of 6 women workers is employed in a blue-collar job, but almost half the men are in such jobs. Women are almost as likely as men to be factory workers, but are very seldom employed as skilled craftsmen, the occupation group for 1 out of 5 men workers.

More than 1 out of 5 women but only 1 out of 14 men workers is a service worker. Three-fourths of the women and virtually all of the men service workers are employed in occupations other than private household work.

Unemployment.--Unemployment rates are consistently higher for women than for men, for teenagers than for adults, and for Negroes than for whites:

Race and age	Average percent unemployed in 1969	
	Women	Men
All races	4.7	2.8
16 to 19 years	13.3	11.4
20 years and over	3.7	2.1
Negro and other races (except white)	7.8	5.3
16 to 19 years	27.7	21.3
20 years and over	5.8	3.7

Earnings.--Women's annual earnings are substantially lower than those of men. Much of the difference is accounted for by the fact that women are more likely than men to have only part-time and/or part-year jobs. But even among workers fully employed the year round, women's median earnings are only about three-fifths those of men--$4,457 and $7,664, respectively, in 1968. This gap reflects primarily the differences in the occupational distribution of women and men and in the types and levels of jobs held within each occupation.

Median wage or salary incomes of year-round full-time women workers in selected major occupation groups in 1968 were as follows:

Major occupation group	Income	As percent of men's income
Professional and technical workers	$6,691	66
Nonfarm managers	5,635	54
Clerical workers	4,789	65
Operatives	3,991	59
Sales workers	3,461	40
Service workers (except private household)	3,332	55

Contributions to family income.--The contributions of working wives are of crucial importance where they raise family income above the poverty level or from a low to a middle range. Only 3 percent of all husband-wife families had incomes below $3,000 in 1968 when the wife was a worker; 10 percent, when she was not.

Among all working wives, the median contribution to family income in 1968 was more than one-fourth; among those who worked year round full time, three-eighths.

OUTLOOK FOR WOMEN WORKERS

Shortages of skilled workers in many professional and technical, clerical, and service occupations provide excellent opportunities for qualified women workers. Legislation enacted during the past decade barring discrimination in employment on the basis of sex should open up new opportunities for women to train for and enter more diversified jobs and to advance to jobs of higher skill level.

New job opportunities, advances in the educational attainment of women, greater longevity of women, and increased use of household appliances and convenience foods all point to a continuation of the trend toward increased labor force participation of women if the American economy continues its present rate of growth.

Note.--Figures are from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Charts by Westinghouse Electric Corp.